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ABSTRACT

To evaluate the current conditions and perceptions of school media specialists, a questionnaire was disseminated to 700 school library media specialists in six southeastern states. Participants were asked to rank 18 perception items on a four-part scale, having to do with media center mission and use. Most frequently mentioned as "very appropriate" were faculty in-service teaching training, student use of the center and the convenient location of the facility. It is suggested that media specialists' concern with such matters indicates need for more aggressive role in program planning and development. (SK)

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A SURVEY OF THE ISSUES, PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS AFFECTING SCHOOL MEDIA SPECIALISTS IN THE SOUTHEASTERN PART OF THE UNITED STATES

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submitted by

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NEW TRENDS AND SPECIALIZATIONS

It is a fallacy to assume that merely fusing two or more disciplines, (e.g., librarianship and instructional technology) will create a totally new and different educational discipline. In fact, the welding of these two disciplines has done little more than to bring these two distinct disciplines into closer physical proximity. The fallacy is compounded when these two disciplines are brought together within the same department while the respective personnel continue to perpetuate and support their own particular and favored area. However, library media is in fact a distinct specialization . . . it established a newer philosophical approach which not only draws upon the knowledge, skills, and techniques, of the school librarian, the curriculum specialist, the instructional technologist, but also creates a synergistic effect. That is, it produces a new and distinct type of information-oriented specialist.

It cannot be over-emphasized that mixing the several fields do not constitute the school media specialization. The mere mixing of these fields, both academically and administratively, does not in itself provide the basis for an effective and efficient school media operation. The development of a school media program requires an instructional team effort---a formulation of theories and practices directed toward unifying a schools' instructional program.

The major activities necessary for functioning as a school library media specialist coalesce into new and different competencies. It is through unifying these competencies that a new and distinct role is defined. It is through the analysis and interpretation of these roles that has validated and subsequently established the school media field as a unique and different specialization.

The school media specialist utilizes both print and nonprint resources and implements these resources into meeting the instructional objectives and needs of users. School media specialists now view—or should view—themselves as integral components of the schools' instructional teams: bringing into play an array of instructional materials which enrich and broaden the instructional objectives.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Never before, in the history of education, has there been as many new trends and innovations in the areas of research, curriculum and instructional development, and media design and utilization.

Like other educationally related disciplines, media is becoming increasingly complicated by the vast waves of knowledge sweeping our scientific, social, technological, and philosophical fields. The impact of these changes demands a careful and continuing appraisal on the involvement that school media specialists play in instructional design and development.

In order to assess the impact of changing conditions on the field of library media, a study was conducted by Ball in the Fall, 1973. The resulting data was analyzed and interpreted and several conclusions were posited. The information gleaned from this Study was used as a base for further evaluating the current conditions and perceptions of school library media specialists.

Initially, this data was used to formulate a questionnaire (APPENDIX A) which was disseminated to 700 school library media specialists serving school systems throughout six southeastern states, (Florida, South Carolina, Mississippi, Georgia, Alabama, and Tennessee.) This questionnaire was mailed out during the first week of October, 1974. A cut-off date for receiving returned questionnaires was established and held at January 15, 1975. The criteria for selecting school media specialists (SMSs) for the second year's study was the same as in the Fall, 1973 study. That is:

1. distributing questionnaires to representative school districts within each of the six states, i.e., northern, eastern, southern, and central sections of each state.
2. the Average Daily Membership (ADM) of the school districts.

Three-hundred-and-eighty-one (381) of the original 700 SMSs surveyed returned questionnaires, however, only 324 were sufficiently completed and could be used in

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this Study. Of these 324 useable questionnaires, 178 were completed by elementary school library media specialists. The remaining respondents (156) were employed in secondary school media programs.

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

A graphic display of the responses will be found on Table 1. Each of the (18) Perception Items are ranked according to frequency of responses. Respondents (SMSs) were asked to rate each item on a 4-point scale with weights assigned to each of the four points.

VALUE	WEIGHT
Very appropriate	4
Fairly Appropriate	3
Fairly Inappropriate	2
Very Inappropriate	1

The first grouping of items receiving the greater frequency of response are related toward the access and delivery systems of school library media centers. They are:

> Faculty in service training sessions are a part of the centers' operation. This item received the greatest frequencies of responses displaying a mean score of 3.74 (where 4.00 equals "Very Appropriate"). Over 97% of the elementary and secondary levels school media specialists responded to this item in the "Very" or "fairly" appropriate categories.
>
> Over 95% of the SMSs responded in the "appropriate" categories that the majority of the students in their respective school were using the centers. This item ranked second in terms of the mean score (3.66).
>
> SMSs felt that their media centers were in convenient locations and accessible to students (and teachers). Over 94% of the SMSs responded that this item was "appropriate". Coupled with ongoing inservice training sessions, over 93% of the SMSs have implemented training sessions, directed toward orienting students to use the library media centers as integral part of their ongoing instructional delivery system.

The four preceding items have a range of mean scores from 3.53 to 3.74. Each item could be considered to fall within the parameters of the "Very Appropriate" category (Mean score range attached to this Category is 4.00 - 3.50). These first

four items seem to point out that the SMSs feels they have developed adequate access and delivery systems which expedite the flow of instructional materials from initial selection to ultimate utilization. The students and teachers orientation sessions facilitate access and delivery systems which provide students and teachers with understandings and skills for identifying and locating information (and utilizing available programs). The SMSs who seemed to have developed sound access and delivery systems responded in a more favorable way that users developed proprietary interests in the programs and services of their centers.

The next two items which received the larger frequencies of responses are:

> SMSs feel they have developed and are maintaining sound and functional relationships with those supervisory personnel to whom they are responsible (93%) and there seems to be increasing acceptance of other members of faculties toward the programs and services of the respective media centers. Elementary level school library media specialists (91%) felt this statement was more appropriate than secondary level SMSs (83%)

These two items seem to point out that SMSs are developing and maintaining a more positive image of themselves and are subsequently obtaining greater professional visibility for their programs. A public information program is a valuable activity for school media specialists to engage in. A viable information program is useful not only for reporting on newly procured materials but is increasingly more effective when directed toward students, teachers, administrators, and citizen groups to: (1) stimulate interest, (2) develop professional rapport, (3) improve the center's image, and (4) report on progress of the media center's programs and services. Improving professional rapport between the school media center and other departments and within the instructional program seems to be important for the continued growth and success of school media programs.

Another item which seems to buttress the thrust toward an improved public image is reflected from the second ranked item, That is, the "majority of students are using the centers". This item, when coupled the 5th and 6th ranked items, seems to point out that SMSs are becoming more aware of educational concerns and

issues outside the walls of the school media centers. SMSs appear to be identifying with and relating more to the instructional programs and activities which compose the schools' total learning environments.

The next three items (ranked 7th, 8th, and 9th) point toward an adequacy of available resources. Let's examine these more closely.

> Approximately 69% of the respondents felt they have available adequate materials and equipment to serve their schools' ongoing instructional programs. There was similar percentage of agreement to this item between both elementary and secondary level SMSs.
>
> While 73% of the SMSsfelt they are provided adequate space to conduct the current operations of their school media centers, only 59% indicated there was sufficient space set aside for teachers use in designing and producing their own instructional materials.

These two items indicate a need for further study on how school principals and supervisors allocate space for their schools' media programs and services. It might be pointed out that some of the SMSs surveyed do not provide production facilities in their respective schools because some districts provide centralized media services. Also, we consider that SMSs do not feel they have attained sufficient competencies and skills for assisting other teachers, and instructional support personnel, to design and produce materials. This latter judgment may have some validity as we shall see later in this study when we review how SMSs feel about their abilities for implementing media programs and services around the "new media" concept.

The remaining (9) items seem to evidence various constraints, inadequacies, and limitations affecting SMSs efforts toward implementing and maintaining program planning and development activities.

> Fifty-six per cent of the SMSs responding agreed that their centers are seldomed used for studyhall purposes. This was especially acknowledged by secondary level SMSs (62%).
>
> Thirty-nine per cent of the respondents felt that college and university teacher-training programs are requiring a course directed toward more effective media utilization; the data indicates that secondary level SMSs seemed to feel this statement is more appropriate than did the re-

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sponding elementary level SMSs. There was a 91% favorable response by both elementary and secondary respondents that a course in media utilization should be required for teacher certification.

Both elementary and secondary SMSs indicated a concern that teachers are not incorporating sufficient quantities of nonprint materials within their specific instructional programs. As a result, the following item indicates a paucity of planning, between the SMSs and other instructional personnel. There seems to be less of this type of cooperative planning in the elementary level programs than in secondary.

It is interesting to note that the two items ranked 12th and 13th seem to point out that there is a lack of directed, cooperative planning and teachers are not fully utilizing nonprint materials. SMSs seems aware they must establish and maintain a system for planning with teachers to facilitate in the attainment of instructional and professional objectives. In order for school media specialists to effectively plan for and efficiently administer a full media program, they must possess both managerial skills and have acquired a wide-range of knowledges and skills to facilitate the utilization of learning resources.

It might be suggested as SMSs take more of a leadership role toward acquainting classroom teachers with: 1) availability of materials; 2) scheduling and/or operating equipment; 3) understanding the school's media programs; and 4) utilizing its services. By developing these awarenesses, many teachers will become increasingly aware as to the significant impact media directed activities can have on improving their instructional programs.

The responses to the final items points out that 35% of the SMSs felt competent in operating a media program around the "new media" concept. Secondary level SMSs (40%) seemed to feel more adequate than those on the elementary level (27%). This 14th ranked item has many implications. These implications are so broad and far reaching and could have a direct effect on the frequencies of responses placed on the other items.

It seems that majority of the SMSs polled had concerns about their level of proficiency for utilizing all instructional resources to reach program objectives. Much of the data supports a concern that SMSs are not or do not feel sufficiently prepared to participate in a systematic planning and development process for organizing and implementing quality instructional programs. The major question

that all school media specialists must address themselves is "How well are the centers' programs and services responding to the total instructional program for achieving ongoing instructional goals and objectives?" It would seem that a major focus in planning inservice and preservice programs should emphasize how school media personnel can develop systematic approaches for formulating more efficient and effective instructional delivery systems.

From this rather crude interpretation of data, it could indicate that SMSs need to extend their professional competencies beyond those of selecting, organizing, maintaining and disseminating their centers' holdings. We would suggest that SMSs must begin to see the need for obtaining skills and understandings in order to determine the appropriate resource(s) and place them within a proper instructional sequence.

> Seventy-one per cent of the SMSs indicated that they are assigned tasks not directly related to the ongoing programs and services of their media centers. This could point to several conditions which need to be corrected (i.e., poor public information programs, lack of intense involvement in instructional and curricula program planning and development, absence of definitive priorities, or an uncomprising administrator.) This condition seems to be less of a concern of secondary SMSs than those employed on the elementary school level.

A major problem still affecting the achievement of quality media programs and services is the lack of support personnel. Adequate support personnel are needed to implement a comprehensive school media program. Except in centers which services a large number of student and teacher users, many SMSs must maintain their center's program and services with little or no supportive personnel.

The least ranked items indicate:

1.) There are not sufficient funds allocated to meet the ongoing program and service needs of the center and 2.) inadequate opportunities are afforded for effecting or influencing positive instructional change on a district-wide level.

Very few, if any, school systems can afford to allocate sufficient funds to provide all the resources that their teachers and students will need. Therefore,

priorities must be established on the basis of instructional imperatives. This indicates a need for media specialists to direct the centers' programs and services toward the mainstream of educational programing; and not as a support or an adjunct to it. The responses also evidences a need to formulate budgetary needs upon the goals and objectives of the schools; instructional programs and the needs and interests of the users. The benefits of placing cost analysis upon instructional imperatives would seem more appropriate than acquisitioning a number of volumes and materials with no other criteria withstanding (except upon an arbitrary allocation by an uninformed administrator).

All instructional personnel of a school district need to participate in the formulation of policies and decisions which affect instructional programming. Extensive effort needs to be directed toward developing bi-directional communication systems that will facilitate two-way communication among line and staff personnel.

CONCLUSIONS

All responses were the personal and professional opinions of School Media specialists. After a careful review of this Study's data on SMSs perceptions about the quality of their media programs and services, we may still need to ask which aspects of planning and development seem most effective and which appear least effective. A review of the items indicates some trends and even some clear-cut-patterns. The items with the top four ranks mainly have to do with developing the access and delivery systems of school media centers. The succeeding two items have to do with media specialists' professional relationships with other instructional personnel. There is a feeling, on the part of 50 per cent of the respondents, that their relationship with teachers, students, and superiors are "Very Appropriate".

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The respondents indicated that considerable attention is given toward orienting teachers and students to more effectively utilize media centers. The majority of the SMSs indicated that they have adequate resources to meet those current needs of students and teachers. The "adequacy of resources" as noted in the Study, does not necessarily indicate an "adequacy" toward Standards directed toward Media Programs: District and School as defined and described in the 1975 publication developed by the American Library Association and the Association for Educational Communications and Technology. Here, adequacy refers to the completeness of materials and other resources necessary to meet current needs and objectives as perceived by the responding SMSs.

At the other end of the rank order is a cluster of nine items, all having to do with some efforts directed toward planning developing instructional media programs. The 13th and 14th items seem to have the greatest significance toward media program planning and development. These items indicate that:

> The majority of SMSs do not feel they have those competencies to operate their programs within the principles and practices as delineated within the "new media" concept. That is, upon these principles and practices as described within the area of instructional development. (Item 14).
>
> Also, SMSs feel that they need to become more of an integral part of the schools' instructional planning efforts. An effort which is directed toward improving the quality of instructional delivery. (Item 13)

Here is an indication that media specialists must be aggressive . . . more gregarious . . . one of the most tenacious members of the school's instructional team for assuming a leadership role in program planning and development. An important element for establishing an maintaining effective media programs is a sound and valid system for evaluation. An appropriate evaluation system is essential for acquiring a broader data base for the future planning and development of school media programs.

It is obvious that this Study posits more questions than it provides the answers as to what is going on in school media programs. However, implications

are that a successful school media specialists is not one with a singular purpose for materials selection and dissemination. The successful media specialist is a multi-faceted professional who possesses competencies and skills for:

training faculty and students to more efficiently and effectively use the programs and services of the media center.

maintains positive public relation images with other teachers, supervisors, and students and citizen groups.

links resources with instructional objectives and their accompanying strategies.

cooperatively plan with other instructional personnel to improve the quality of the school's instructional program.

works within the existing framework of the district's hierarchy for effect meaningful change by providing information and data which can be used for implementing or altering district-wide policies and procedures.

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TABLE 1

PERCEPTIONS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALISTS WITH SELECTED CONCERNS FOR THEIR MEDIA CENTERS' PROGRAMS AND SERVICES WITH ITEMS RANKED IN TERMS OF MEAN PERCEPTIONS EXPRESSED, AND BY SERVICE LEVEL: 1974-75

Perception Item[1]	School Media Specialists							Percentage Responding Very or Fairly Appropriate by Service Level	
	Item Scores			Percentage by Degree of Appropriateness					
	Rank	Mean[2]	Total[3]	Very Appropriate (wt. = 4)	Fairly Appropriate (wt.=3)	Fairly Inappropriate (wt.=2)	Very Inappropriate (wt.=1)	Elementary	Secondary
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Faculty inservice training sessions are a part of this center's operation	1	3.74	100	77	20	3	----	97	98
Majority of students use this center	2	3.66	100	72	24	2	2	95	96
Media center is convenient and accessible	3	3.62	100	65	30	3	2	95	94
Student orientation sessions are a part of this center's operation	4	3.53	100	62	32	3	3	93	95
Maintains positive relationship with supervisory personnel	5	3.39	100	50	43	3	4	90	85
Acceptance of center's programs and services by faculty	6	3.33	100	46	42	11	1[4]	91	83
Adequate materials and equipment available to serve school's instructional program(s)	7.5	2.87	100	29	40	20	11	68	71
Adequate space provided to conduct current operation	7.5	2.87	100	26	47	15	12	76	69
Adequate space available for producing materials	9	2.50	100	11	48	21	20	56	62
Center is seldom used for "study hall" purposes	10	2.49	100	14	42	23	21	51	62
Students in teacher-training programs are taking a basic course in media usage	11	2.23	100	10	29	35	26	33	44
Teachers are utilizing non-print materials within respective instructional programs	12	2.20	100	8	30	36	26	42	35
Direct involvement in cooperative planning for improving instructional programs in school	13	2.16	100	8	26	30	21	23	42
Feels competent in operating media program around "new media" concept	14	2.12	100	6	29	40	21	27	40
Seldomed assigned tasks which are not related to instructional function(s)	15	2.04	100	5	24	41	30	22	36
Sufficient paraprofessional support available	16	1.97	100	4	28	29	30	30	35
Adequate funds appropriated to meet ongoing program(s) and service(s) needs of the center	17	1.86	100	4	29	26	41	32	33
Adequate opportunities and channels provided for affecting the policies and procedures of the district	18	1.63		2	24	29	45	21	29

1. The wording of some of the items is abbreviated; for complete wording, see questionnaire, APPENDIX A.
2. The mean is based on the weights as indicated in columns 5 through 8.
3. Because of rounding, detail does not necessarily add to the total.
4. Less than 1/2 of 1 per cent.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

Appendix A

1. A part of this media center's operation is an ongoing student orientation program which is offered to assist many of our students to more efficiently and effectively utilize the materials and services of this center. ___

2. The majority of this school's teachers seem accepting of this center's programs and services ___

3. I feel we possess sufficient materials, equipment and items to meet the needs of our instructional programs ___

4. I am involved in extra tasks not directly related to the ongoing functions of developing and maintaining appropriate school media programs and services, i. e., monitoring halls and lunch rooms, raising and collecting money, assisting the principal in the administrative duties of this school, checking attendance figures ___

5. The school system, under which I am employed, provides opportunities and channels for instructional personnel to offer "constructive' input and information for affecting district-wide policies and procedures as they relate to instructional programing ___

6. I feel competent in maintaining a school media center which operates under the "new media" concept. That is, organizing and selecting all resources to meet the requirements of specific instructional objectives ___

7. In terms of this center's current operations, I feel there is adequate physical space available to serve our school's instructional programs ___

8. The majority of the students directly benefit from this center's programs and/or services at least once-a-week ___

9. The School's media center is in a convenient location and is accessible to the majority of our students and teachers ___

10. I feel that I am maintaining sound and functional relationships with my school's principal and other district-wide supervisory personnel to whom I am also responsible. ___

11. In terms of this center's present needs, there is adequate space available for designing and constructing materials directed toward the needs of our students ___

12. To my knowledge, teacher-training programs---in our colleges and universities---are requiring a formal course on the basics of media utilization ___

13. Within the past few years, this center has been appropriated sufficient funds for acquiring the basic resources needed to complement this school's ongoing instructional program ___

14. This media center is seldom, if ever, used for studyhall purposes ___

15. The majority of the teachers, in this school, are incorporating nonprint instructional materials with other instructional methods (instructional materials can be considered films, audio tapes, disc recordings, televised presentations, programmed materials, simulation and games, models, charts, flat pictures, and so on) ___

16. In terms of the level of this media center's staffing needs, I feel there is sufficient paraprofessional and supportive personnel provided to maintian our ongoing programs and services ___

17. Along with other instructional personnel, I too am actively involved in the planning process for improving the quality of instruction in this school. ___

18. A part of this media center's operation is an ongoing, inservice training program which is offered to assist this school's instructional personnel to more efficiently and effectively utilize the materials and services for improving instruction ___

PLEASE RESPOND TO THIS LAST STATEMENT WITH EITHER "YES" or "NO"

Do you feel a course in media utilization should be required for teacher certification? ___yes ___no

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